

DAILY NEWS

N.Y., WE ARE NOT CHEESY!

Our pizza fest good: group

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Hopefully this piefest won't be half-baked.

The first-ever New York Pizza Festival rises in the Bronx this fall, and organizers are taking steps to avoid the dough-saster that plagued its predecessor.

Last September, New York City Pizza Festival — which is not affiliated with the upcoming extravaganza — evoked outrage from customers who dished out as much as \$75 for the promise of a fancy food fest but were served up long lines, warm wine and cold, minuscule sample slices (inset).



The organizer of the cheesy event held in a Bushwick, Brooklyn, parking lot ultimately announced it was refunding ticket buyers, but only after the state attorney general's office began investigating.

Those handling the coming sauce-filled street fair vow they're taking precautions to avoid heated patrons. Fred Mortati, president of the Pizza Academy Foundation, which created the New York Pizza Festival, says guests should expect perfect pies.

"The professional pizzaioli that were handpicked to attend are pros at pumping out delicious pies so all slices will be fresh and hot," Mortati told the Daily News. "We have been putting a lot of thought into the layout of the event so that everything flows properly."

He adds that there will be "full-size slices — no sample

This year's pizza party is a two-day fest happening Oct. 6 and 7 on Crescent Ave. in the Belmont section of the Bronx, just steps from Arthur Ave., known as the borough's Little Italy.

The New York Pizza Festival will feature more than 25 different pizza joints slinging different styles of pies. There will be a mix of local favorites — like Di Fara of Brooklyn and Denino's from Staten Island — and standouts from around the country.

But why would New Yorkers, who can score a decent slice on almost any corner and are a train ride away from some of the best pizza in the nation, need to sample pies from other states?

"The pizzaioli from outside New York have been hailed as some of the best in the industry," Mortati said. "Every insider knows that Tony Gemignani of San Francisco is one of the most influential people on the pizza scene while Jonathan Goldsmith of Chicago is listed alongside Michelin-starred restaurants as a must-go-to spot.

"That is the idea; gather some of the best possible pizzerias around the country to celebrate the different styles offered around the world right here in the pizza capital of the United States."

If you're salivating, tickets to the event, which is free to enter, are required for alcohol and slices. Now through Sept. 9, you can buy \$20 tickets good for three slices, or \$30 tickets for six slices at nycpizzafestival.com.

